History
of
The Reading Club

from

1933 to 1959

by

Nora Quigley

This booklet for
Mike Quigley

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Every Thursday Afternoon

Whenever anyone hears of this group of women who have met every Thursday afternoon for the last twenty-five years, he or she exclaims, "EVERY Thursday afternoon! How do you do it?" It is a long story — how we do it. It is a story made up of joys and sorrows, fun and responsibility, birth, marriage and death, all of which have knit us into a group the like of which is hard to describe. We are called a club, but we have no president, no minutes and no dues. A sorority maybe? No, that hardly fits and yet the sister idea is strong. For, I believe, our feeling toward each other is more like that of sisters than anything else. We quarrel and criticize each other, have fun together and, underlying all that, bear a love and loyalty that is found most often in blood relationship.

It all started on September 14, 1933, when Nora invited thirteen young women to her house with the idea of forming a reading club similar to the one her mother belonged to in Lancaster. She was a bit apprehensive about the idea; maybe it was too Victorian, a group to meet once a week with its sewing while someone read aloud. But no, the women were enthusiastic about it, and before the afternoon was over, they had all signed up, except Catherine Allison, who felt she could not spare the time. Olive Cliffe, who was quite sick, had not been able to come to that first meeting, but was told about it and readily consented to join the group. And so, we started out with thirteen members, namely: S. Catherine Love, Josephine C. Sheffer, Mary W. Craig, Margaret H. Warner, Janet S. Denithorne, Elizabeth T. Gast, Winifred B. Shallcross, Grace C. Cook, Deborah S. Valentine, Martha W. Love, Genevieve B. Walker, Olive H. Cliffe, and Elinora R. Quigley.

The next Thursday afternoon we went to Deborah's house on Curtin Street, where we started reading *Anthony Adverse,* Grace Cook reading. Deborah served most delicious refreshments, and we really got off to a good start. It wasn't until November ninth at a meeting held by Janet on Linn Street, that Olive was able to attend. She was feeling well again and was warmly welcomed by all of us.

As we continued our rounds of pleasant Thursday afternoons, it became noticeable that Jo was going to have a baby, and many of us took to knitting bootees. In July, 1934, we had our first baby, pretty little Sally Sheffer, making the third of Jo's nice family.

There was one small fly in the ointment in the fact that we could not smoke when we met at Betty's rectory. That is, we couldn't smoke openly, but those of us who couldn't take it sneaked up to the bathroom for a puff. This did not seem quite honest, but before we could decide what to do about it, the Gasts left Bellefonte and went to Bloomsburg in the summer of 1934. There in Bloomsburg, Betty entertained us all at a lovely luncheon on Thursday, September 27th. It was Thursday, May 16, 1935, before we got around to returning the hospitality by inviting Betty to a luncheon at the Tallyrand. We all enjoyed having Betty with us once more and went to Winifred's to play bridge afterward.

On May 29, 1935, we had our first wedding. Grace, after much secrecy, much annoyance and much ado, finally married Colonel Reynolds. And the first few meetings we had in the big brown stone house were strange indeed.

For awhile our meetings were uneventful, except for the time our book was lost for several weeks and was finally found in Winifred's knitting bag, and for the time Mike Quigley, five years old, caused lots of amusement by joining us with his sewing at a meeting at his mother's house on Linn Street, and finally running out of the room because we "made too much noise." But early in 1937 we had the sad news that we were going to lose another member, and on Thursday, May 14th, we had a farewell luncheon for Olive at the Tallyrand, playing bridge at Grace's house afterward.

After Olive left we had one of our dissenting periods. We had now only eleven members and thought we should keep the number up to twelve, but who was to receive the honor? We were split in two — one side for Catherine Sieg and the other for Rebekah Mull — and it seemed for awhile we would not be able to get together on it. But finally in August, 1937, Catherine was duly elected and came to her first meeting at Janet's on Thursday, August 12th. In the meantime Peggy had gradually grown larger and larger, and finally missed two meetings to bring little Freddy into this world. Again there was great rejoicing. In September of that year, Winifred invited us to have lunch at Twinmount. Olive was there, too, and it was a gala occasion, especially the game of strip croquet, which got most hilarious while the last three battled it out — Nora, Deborah and Cat Love. But Cat won because she wore more underclothes than the rest of us. Then we went swimming in the nude, Mary slipping under the water as modestly as possible. This was the first of a series of picnics at Twinmount, one each year until Twinmount was sold. They were memorable occasions and looked forward to with great anticipation. In October, 1937, we had our first meeting in the brand new Quigley house on Curtin Street, and the next meeting was the first at Cat Sieg's, pepping us up with new places to go. It was about this time that the Reading Club staged a wonderful surprise housewarming for the Quigleys, and, a bit of prophecy maybe, the Ray Nolls were in on it, although it wasn't until twenty years had passed that Julia was to become one of our members.

In March, 1938, we realized we were losing another member, Gen, who was following Bricky to California. So we had another farewell party, this time at the Penn Belle, with bridge at Nora's in the afternoon. We each brought a prize, and we each took a prize home, the winner having had her choice. But we gave Gen an extra one, a copy of *Imperial City,* the book which we were reading at the time. Again we had a vacancy, but, of course, after the last election, Becky Mull was the natural one for us to invite. She, so recently a widow, was happy to join us, and was a most ardent member until her death thirteen years later. I can remember her saying that no matter how hot a house was one week or how cold the next, the Reading Club could stand anything as long as the food was good. I guess maybe she was right, for no matter how many times we earnestly resolved to simplify the refreshments, it was only a couple of weeks before we were gorging ourselves on all kinds of rich food once more. Today, diet has entered the scene, but the less said about that, the better.

The 20th to the 23rd of June, 1938, marks the time of another great event for the Reading Club. These were the days we spent at Winifred's camp in the Poconos. Grace, Janet, Deborah, Martha, Peg, Cat Sieg, Winifred and Nora were there and had a wonderful time swimming, boating, walking in the woods and squabbling, especially over who was to get breakfast and how the coffee was to be made. That was the end of our first five years and our more or less gay and carefree era.

The war in Europe was beginning to cast its shadow this way. We had to change our precious Thursday afternoon to Wednesday, or sometimes Friday, as many of us worked in the Red Cross rooms on Thursday. We took on the work of the Needlework Guild, with Grace as President, and did a good job of gathering together donated garments and displaying them in the store windows before they were given out through local charities. This went on for three or four years, until we thought there was not enough demand for our supplies and handed the work on to others. I guess we were right, as the project did die out, more than likely due to the war. We also got busy knitting afghans for the hospital, first from scraps of yarn we had and then from yarn we bought especially. This was our serious period, our endeavoring to be more than just a social group. Winifred was working in the Watchman office and wrote nobly about us for the newspaper. But it didn't change us really.

Gen had come back to State College to live, and we went over there to meetings, feeling so sorry that all their glorious plans for California had fallen through; but it was only about two years before she was off again, to Allentown in October, 1941. Janet had been living in State College for some time and Peg in Pleasant Gap for awhile. What a time we had deciding in whose car we would go, for one drives too fast, another too slowly; or one car is too hard to get in and out of, another too noisy; and if it looked like snow, we did not go at all.

In February, 1942, we had our first wedding of the next generation. Jimmy Craig married Mary Ann Aikens, and we all went to the stupendous reception at the Aikens place. We went in a special bus as gasoline was hard to come by in those days; but it was no hardship for us, that bus trip. I can still hear Cat Love shrieking with excitement and see her dancing at the wedding.

There was just one more farewell party and that was when Winifred went to Bryn Mawr to live in May, 1942. We had our all-prize bridge game and gave Winnie a lacy slip. Soon after that Nora followed her Army husband to Indianapolis for a year, and another camp follower, Janet, went to Milwaukee to fight the war. Six of our Reading Club sons enlisted, Dick and Jimmy, the Walker boys in Allentown and the Shallcross twins in Philadelphia. Our hearts were with them in their dangers. Life was not gay, but we were happy to be together every Thursday afternoon. One day in 1944, a little old woman hobbled into Reading Club with a shawl over her head and a cane to help her along. Then we were hilarious when we found it was Grandma Craig, our first grandmother.

About this time a very tragic event really shook us; Pete and Jo were divorced and Jo left for her old home in Painesville. Our hearts were indeed heavy. Now came the low ebb for Reading Club. Cat Love dropped out of the club for over a year, and others were considering doing the same. Peggy had another baby and for awhile she did not come to meetings because of her sorrow over little Ethel, a happy little baby, but too happy for this world's trials. Fortunately, after several years Our Lord had compassion and took her unto Himself, as He had another of our Reading Club children, Charlie Denithorne, some years before. And Grace, now a widow and living on Curtin Street once more, began a long battle with her heart, a losing battle, for on May 15, 1946, she died in the Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia. She was our first member to leave us this way. Then Sam Shallcross died, and Winifred came sadly home to buy Grace's house and to find comfort in being with us again every Thursday afternoon.

But sadness and grief can't continue indefinitely, and I think we made an unconscious effort to lift ourselves out of the low ebb. We had birthday parties, one for each member on the Thursday afternoon nearest her birthday. Surprisingly often it was on the very day. We showered her with gifts, both foolish and useful, and had a cake with candles, of course. Also we had a fifteenth anniversary party on September 16, 1948. We had luncheon at the Nittany Lion and played bridge on the sunny porch afterward. There were four absent — Olive, Betty, Jo and, of course, Grace. We resolved to have more reunions as we had had such a good time. In February, 1950, we had our second wedding among the children, when Ellen married Joe Maloney. "Do we have to invite the Reading Club?" asked Mike when trying to figure how to get a lot of people into a small space for the reception. "OF COURSE, we have to invite the Reading Club — they helped to raise Ellen!" And they all came and gave her their blessing, except Martha who was away. Another of our daughters has always had our blessing and our best wishes, although perhaps for awhile she did not realize it, and that is little Ann Sieg. Several times she had us all very much worried and upset, but now she is able to greet us at her door with a merry "Hello, my friends!"

Then came that dark day of January 15, 1951, when all of a sudden the telephone rang, and from house to house the sad word went around that Becky had died. Dear little Becky, always so kind and helpful to others, always ready with her wrinkly smile, had gone, just like that, leaving behind a group of friends to miss her and to think of her every Thursday afternoon. 1951 not only marked the death of Becky, but also of Jack Cliffe in December. Our love went over the miles to Olive, so recently and tragically a widow, and we were hushed and humbled by the thought of that intense blow to our friend.

But life goes on, and the next thing we knew Mary was getting that beautiful house she had dreamed of for so long. We all gave her valuable suggestions in planning it, and it was a happy day when we had our first meeting there. We have had meetings in lots of houses. Peg, having moved eight times, provided the greatest diversity, but we hope she is now settled in the lovely new home on the hill overlooking Bellefonte. Winnie runs her a close second with six movings in Bellefonte, whereas Debs has moved only once, in 1939. Katie Sieg gets the prize for having stayed always in the same nice, big, cool house, but in the spring she will join the ranks of those all-on-one-floor, hot in summer, cold in winter. Nora holds the record for having designed and built two houses, a beautiful big one and then a cozy, little one. No matter how often we move, we always feel at home, however, for there are always the same chairs, the same teacups and the same silver.

Having got Mary settled in her new house, we began to notice how Winnie and Earl Orr were appearing together at odd moments. Then, lo and behold, she was sparkling a new ring, and on August 12, 1953, they were married. It was the second wedding among our members, but how much more rejoicing there was over this affair than the first, when Grace married the Colonel! This one seemed just right. As if that weren't enough excitement for one summer, on October 8th, we held our twentieth reunion. There were thirteen of us, all who had ever belonged to Reading Club, with the exception of the two who had passed away. Those present were Mary, Olive, Gen, Winifred, Janet, Katie Sieg, Cat Love, Deborah, Martha, Betty, Jo, Peg and Nora. We met at Nora's house on Curtin Street for cocktails and a delicious luncheon in which we all had a hand, and then we talked and talked, and took pictures and showed pictures, and signed mementos. We went to our homes for an hour to catch our breath and met again in Winifred's apartment for more cocktails and on to the Brockerhoff to dinner. We sat at two tables because there were thirteen of us. Gen had to leave early, but the rest of us went to Mary's new house to play bridge. Prizes for everybody, of course. At eleven o'clock we decided to call it a day — and *what* a day it had been!

About this time a number of weddings began to crop out among the offspring. The Shallcross twins picked fine wives in Jeannie Wade and Jane Wagner. Both were married in 1951. Billy Sieg married Molly Kellerman in 1953. Dick Valentine made us hopeful for a daughter for Debs and then let us down. In December, 1954, we went to the lovely wedding of young Janet and Andy Linn, and we whispered among ourselves that old Janet looked like the sister of young Janet. Soon the grandchildren began to come; Mary was no longer the only one we could call Grandma. The out-of-town members did best in that line, with Gen and Jo each having ten grandchildren to date.

So we were going along contentedly every Thursday afternoon, picking the most comfortable chairs and sipping our tea and discussing how better the world should be run in government, churches and schools, when suddenly our own little world was turned upside down. Martha, who had never been sick a day, was hurried off to Philadelphia for an operation, and we all held our breath until it was safely over. Then she came bravely back to us, and we relaxed, only to have to go through it all a second time in less than two years. Cat Love, who for years had taken our kidding about wearing wool socks and goloshes and scarves to keep herself in good health, was suddenly off on the same bitter path. Somehow when she came home, things were not the same with our fun-loving Cat. She laughed and played bridge, but that irresistible spontaneity was gone. In another year even the bridge game had lost its interest for her and slowly, while Martha was again in the Philadelphia hospital, Cat slipped away from us, leaving a silent space where all that vim and vigor and effervescence used to be. That was the end of August, 1956.

We were sad and depressed. Shall we go on this way until there is only one of us left to pick up her knitting and read to herself every Thursday afternoon? No, we will put new life into the club. So we each put two names into a hat, tallied them and found we had two new members, Freda Adams and Julia Noll. These two fell easily into our ways, bringing with them new ideas, new children and grandchildren and, indeed, another wedding, when Nancy Adams married young Paul Corman on February 14, 1959.

But it was not too long before these new members were initiated into our sad side. We were gaily planning our twenty-fifth reunion, when Martha, so heroic through all her operations, was afflicted by a stroke. Again we all held our breath while reports of her came and went. But although we waited and prayed, Martha finally died on May 3, 1959, after a slow, sad siege of eight months. We miss Martha and her gentle, kind ways. We miss all our members who have left us in one way or another, and we are always happy to hear from those who have moved away.

But there is still a Thursday afternoon every week on the calendar, and there is still a new book to be read and sometimes shocked by. "What are these modern writers going to say next?" Although, really, our first book, *Anthony Adverse,* twenty-five years ago, should have prepared us. We have read about one hundred seventy-five books since then. Some were good and some we couldn't finish, but all were the subject of much argument always. We may mellow with age and grow more tolerant of each other's shortcomings but never will we all like the same book. Some of us have become very good readers, while some of us still stumble along and look helplessly at Janet when the author lapses into French. The books containing foreign names are the most confusing because each reader pronounces them differently!

And thus Reading Club goes on. There is so much I haven't mentioned — all the brownies, orange cake, and sandwiches which have become favorites; all the chicken-corn soup and special luncheon meetings; all the Quaker calendars which Deborah so kindly gives us; all the recipes traded and knitting patterns copied; all the help with a hemline or the bow on a bonnet; all the jokes on others and jokes on ourselves; and how annoyed we get when some outsider invites us to a party on Thursday afternoon — "Doesn't she *know* we have Reading Club on Thursday?" All this that I have recorded and much more, impossible to say with words, make Thursday Afternoon a very special time. "How do we do it?" they ask. How could we *stop* doing it? Every Thursday Afternoon.

BOOKS WE HAVE READ

Anthony Adverse .... Hervey Allen
Great Americans
Stephen Vincent Benet
Pocohontas .... David Garnett
The First To Go Back
Irini S. Karatina
Oil for the Lamps of China
Alice Tisdale Hobart
The Lamb In His Bosom
Carolyn Miller
The Great Jasper .... Fulton Oursler
Lost Horizon .... James Hilton
Good-bye, Mr. Chips .. James Hilton
Without My Cloak .... Kate O'Brien
No Other Tiger .... A. E. W. Mason
Now in November
Josephine Johnson
North to the Orient
Ann Lindbergh
Europa .... Robert Griffault
Hellbent for Election
James Warburg
The Husband of Mary
Elizabeth Hart
Life With Father .... Clarence Day
Salammba .... Gustave Flaubert
Son of Marietta .... Johan Fabricus
Sparkenbroke .... Charles Morgan
Yang and Yin .. Alice Tisdale Hobart
Water Gypsies .... A. P. Herbert
The Sea of Grass .... Conrad Richter
February Hill ...... Victoria Lincoln
And So, Victoria .. Vaughan Wilkins
Thunderstorm .... G. B. Stern
Imperial City .... Elmer Rice
The Nutmeg Tree .... Margery Sharp
Mortal Storm .... Phyllis Bottome
My Sister Eileen .... Ruth McKenny
The Annointed .. Clyde Brion Davis
With Malice Toward Some
Margaret Halsey
My Son, My Son ...... Howard Spring
Listen, the Wind
Anne M. Lindbergh
Fanny Kemble Margaret Armstrong
Of Lena Geier .... Marcia Davenport
Peril at End House, Agatha Christie
Harlequin House .... Margery Sharp
Sam .... John Selby
Land Below the Wind
Agnes Newton Keith
The Murder of Roger Ackroyd
Agatha Christie
Kitty Foyle ...... Christopher Morley
Portrait of Jenny .... Robert Nathan
Mr. Skeffington .... "Elizabeth"

The Patriotic Murder
Agatha Christie
Burma Road .... Nicol Smith
The Family .... Maria Fedorova
The Voyage .... Charles Morgan
Saphira and the Slave Girl
Willa Cather
Random Harvest .... James Hilton
The Happy Highway
Francis Brett Young
Singing Beach .... Elizabeth Foster
My Theodosia .... Anya Seton
Saratoga Trunk .... Edna Ferber
Drink to Yesterday, Manning Coles
Toast to Tomorrow, Manning Coles
Young Man of Caracas
T. R. Ybarra
London Pride .... Phyllis Bottome
The Pied Piper .... Nevil Shute
See Here, Private Hargrove
Marion Hargrove
We Are Not Alone .... James Hilton
Sea-Gull Cry .... Robert Nathan
A Woman Called Fancy
Frank Yerby
The Tontine ...... Thomas B. Costain
Don't Eat the Daisies .... Jean Kerr
The Visitors .... Mary McMinnies
By Love Possessed
James Gould Cozzens
Letter from Peking .. Pearl S. Buck
The Lady .... Conrad Richter
My Antonia .... Willa Cather
Three Came to Bagdad
Agatha Christie
Elephant Walk .... Robert Standish
Money Man .... Thomas B. Costain
The Blessing .... Nancy Mitford
Rebecca .... Daphne DuMaurier
The Glitter and the Gold
Consuela Vanderbilt
The View from Pompey's Head
Hamilton Basso
January Thaw .... Bellamy Partridge
Autobiography of Elsa Maxwell
Pastoral .... Nevil Shute
City Boy .... Herman Wouk
If Winter Comes
A. M. S. Hutchinson
Dinner at Antoine's
Frances Parkinson Keyes
The Philadelphian .. Richard Powell
Heather Mary .... J. M. Scott
It Happened in Portugal
Caine Mutiny .... Herman Wouk

Mrs. Hugh M. Quigley
536 N. Wilson St.
Bellefonte, Pa.

1575 words

Every Thursday Afternoon

by

Nora Quigley

A true story about women in a small town and how constant and regular meetings together have enabled them to endure hardships and to enjoy life to the fullest over a period of nearly thirty years.

1580 words

EVERY THURSDAY AFTERNOON

Whenever people hear of our group of women who have met every Thursday afternoon for the past twenty-nine years, they exclaim, "*Every* Thursday afternoon! How do you do it?" It is a long story, made up of joys and sorrows, fun and responsibility, birth, marriage and death, all of which have knit us into a group the like of which is hard to describe. We are called a club, but we have no president, no minutes, no dues. A sorority maybe? Not in the formal sense, yet the sister idea is strong. For, I believe, our feeling toward each other is more like that of sisters than anything else. We quarrel and criticize each other, have fun together and, underlying all that, bear a love and loyalty that is most often found only in blood relationship.

It started in 1933 when I was sitting alone sewing and wishing I had someone to read to me. Soon I was calling my friends, inviting them to a tea party, saying nothing about the idea swirling in my mind. When they came I told them and they, too, were enthusiastic about a group which would meet every week to sew while one person read aloud. We decided to call it the Reading Club and to start on the following Thursday. Thus it was that "Every Thursday Afternoon" began to have a special significance for us.

There were twelve of us, all married except two, most of us with one or two children. The first book we read was "Anthony Adverse", parts of which the more sophisticated of us gleefully explained to the unmarried ones. It was a good book with which to start, for the agonizing and exulting we went thru began to knit us together almost immediately. It also held our interest so that we did not want to miss a meeting. We took turns reading and at four o'clock promptly, we stopped for tea and then continued to read until late, for "Anthony Adverse" was that kind of book. But in those days we had maids so it did not matter if we got home just as the family was starting to eat. Nowadays we hurry home to prepare the meal ourselves ---- how hard it is after all that tea!

Our first worry came with the pregnancy of one of our members. Her first baby had been born with a cleft palate, so we were most apprehensive. But she kept us posted on what the doctor said and we kept advising her on what to eat and what not to do, until finally the great day arrived and a perfect little girl was born. Each one of us rejoiced as if we were personally responsible. Actually there was a lot behind this because one of us had a little girl who was a spastic, and another, a little boy who was never able to talk. We had two more babies in the years to follow, the first one normal, but the last one, just when we were easing our minds, was a happy little baby, but, alas, too happy for this world's trials. The mother, grief-stricken, stayed away from meetings until our love and sympathy brought her back.

To add to our worries, the little spastic became depressed and took to throwing herself out of windows. Her mother met with us, anxious for our understanding, but always with her car parked in readiness to leave quickly. We tried to help in every way, showing our love for the child, and today when we meet at her mother's house, she greets us with a merry "Hello, my friends!" Her friends we definitely are --- maybe that is why she is more content now.

We have a son who is an alcoholic and another who cannot resist the temptation of peering into lighted windows. These are our worries. We had a husband who had the brazen nerve to live with another woman in a nearby town for several years before his wife heard about it. We were really shocked and perhaps more indignant than his wife, who quietly got a divorce and moved away to her home town. And we had a husband who was killed in a motor accident with his son, a young student in aviation, flying to his death the next year. After the first blow, the second tragedy following so closely had us hushed and humbled before the intense grief of our friend.

Yes, we have had more than our share of sorrows, difficult and diversified --- maybe that is why we are so close. But we have had our fun, too. To raise our spirits in trying times, we had birthday parties, one for each member on the Thursday nearest the date of her birth. We showered her with gifts and, of course, had a cake with candles. The number of candles was always a matter of great contraversy. We had several picnics at a camp in the country, the most memorable part of one being an hilarious game of strip-croquet, which was won by one of our "maiden ladies" because she wore an unbelievable number of underthings! One year we spent several days at a camp in the Poconos, swimming, fishing and boating, squabbling all the while, especially over which one was to get breakfast and how the coffee was to be made. Whenever a member moved away we had a farewell luncheon for her with bridge afterward. We each took a prize so that we each could win a prize --- the highest choosing first, and so on, leaving the last one for the booby. This method was even more exciting than the bridge game itself! In more recent years our children's weddings might well be called Reading Club parties, with the poor little bride having eight or ten mothers shedding tears over her! We have had three anniversary parties, too. The first, on our fifteenth, was merely one of our bridge luncheons without a farewell, but on our twentieth we invited the members who had left town to come back. This was a great success. We had luncheon, in which we all had had a hand, at the home of one member and spent the afternoon --- Thursday, of course, --- reminiscing and showing family pictures. Then dinner at a hotel followed by bridge at another home --- with prizes for everyone. By twelve o'clock we were simply exhausted. When the twenty-fifth came around we did the same thing. But it wasn't quite the same thing because several members had died --- two so slowly with cancer --- and although we were happy and gay, there seemed to be at times a shadow drifting around, hardly noticeable ---.

We have taken in new members to replace the ones who have left us. They have fallen easily into our ways, providing new interests and new places to meet. Not that we have needed any change of scene, for in the twenty-nine years we have moved into many different homes, some that we helped to build with much advice and much bickering over the vagaries of architects. But actually it is not the place that counts; it is the circle of friends, their fingers busy with sewing or knitting, engrossed in the reading until tea is served and the time has come to tell of a dress purchased at such a bargain, or about the cute sayings of grandson, Johnny.

For we are all becoming grandmas now. I remember the first one --- a little old lady hobbled into the meeting with a cane in her hand and a shawl over her head. We stared in amazement and then how we laughed when we discovered it was Mary, who had just become a grandmother! With the new generation our joys are increasing --- also our problems.

But as long as we have Reading Club, those problems will be easy to solve. Speaking for myself, singularly blessed with very few hardships, these Thursday afternoons have been a priceless experience. If I were feeling blue when I went to a meeting, I came away ashamed of myself and humbled by the greater trials of my friends; if I were feeling pretty full of myself, I came away realizing there were others smarter than I; if I were feeling tired, I came away refreshed. And I like to think that maybe my presence there helped someone else.

There is so much I haven't mentioned --- the two hundred or more books we have read. Some were good and some we couldn't finish. We seldom find one we all like. Time and again we interrupt the reading to argue about a point at length, only to have it explained in the next paragraph! Some of us have become very intelligent readers, while others still stumble along, looking helplessly about when the author lapses into French or German. Nor have I mentioned all the cakes and sandwiches which have become favorites; all the recipes traded and the knitting patterns copied; all the help with a hemline or the bow on a bonnet; all the jokes on ourselves and the jokes on others; and how annoyed we get when some outsider invites us to a party on Thursday afternoon --- "Doesn't she know we have Reading Club on Thirsday?" All this and much more, impossible to put into words, make Thursday Afternoon a very special time. How do we do it, they ask --- how could we stop doing it?

Reading Club Statistics

Grace died in May 1946
after a long siege of heart trouble

Becky died in Jan. 1951
after a sudden heart attack

Cat Love died in 1956 (August)
after a cancer operation in 1955

Martha died in May 1959
after two cancer operations, one in 1954
and one in 1956 and a stroke in 1958

Olive died in July 1966
after a sudden heart attack

Janet died in 1970 in January
about 3 hours after being hit by car.

Another Chapter 1959 - 1969

Ten more years have been added to the life of The Reading Club --- ten autumn years when our pleasure is gradually being concentrated in that of our children rather than in ourselves. Of course there is always Winnie whose never-ending energy carries her and her Earl to Jim's Fishing resort in Florida every winter. And the Nolls have been gallivanting around the world until now when Ray's health makes them think twice about taking a trip. Freda and Enie drive to their Maine camp every summer without fail and the Warners travel about, too, mostly in the path of their children and grandchildren. The Siegs have bought a house in Florida which in a large measure is for the comfort and happiness of Ann who grows little better as the years advance. Deborah in 1967, at age 77, calmly boarded a plane and flew to England to see her little grandson. So, there are many absences on Thursday Afternoon and many times there are just enough for a table of bridge.

Our ardor for parties and reunions is cooling --- actually we have less reason to put on a celebration than in the old days when a birthday was a good excuse or when a member was moving away. On our 15th anniversary in 1948 we had a bridge luncheon at the Nittany Lion Inn and had a grand time. In 1953, our 20th anniversary, old members came back and we really outdid ourselves in putting on a reunion to outshine all other reunions. Never have we had one like it since although in 1959 we tried. It was supposedly our 25th but was postponed a year on account of the death of our beloved Martha. Old members came back again, Jo,Gen and Olive and we spent a happy day together, mostly in Peg's lovely new home in Bel-Air Hills. Now for our 36th anniversary today we are not doing anything special - just having luncheon together and remembering the old days. Freda is still up in Maine and Mary has just returned from an operation at the hospital, but the other seven of us are here, noisy as ever.

For years Deborah has been our only widow, a brave and uncomplaining one. In Jan., 1965, Nora's big strong Hugh died after a long series of strokes had gradually weakened him -- but not his spirit as it was only a few days before he died that he said to Nora "Do you know --- your legs are better-looking now than when I married you". And in April 1967 George Denithorne drove Janet out into the country one morning to gather arbutus and both were as happy as newly-weds. That afternoon after a little rest he went to his office for a while. When he drove home he just barely made it into the garage before he died. A terrible shock to Janet but what a happy way to go! At his funeral Deborah said to Nora, "Now there are three of us". And fortunately to date there are still only three of us. That does not take into consideration Olive who would be the fourth of us if she herself had not gone in July 1966 to join the three men she loved, Raleigh, Ritchie and her son, Jack. John Love who was never the same after Martha died, finally died in Nov. 1966. Another death, a very sad one in 1960, was that of Billy Shallcross, very suddenly, leaving his wife, Jane, with his little son, Sammy and pregnant with Sandra.

But where there is death there is always life to make up for it --- many little grandchildren have arrived to carry on the traditions of their crazy grandmothers and who knows? maybe even the Reading Club! Gen and Jo are way ahead with 13 grandchildren each, Gen's oldest, Geoffrey, having just married last month (Aug. 1969). Nora comes next with 7, then Peg with 5, Winnie, 4 and Catherine, Julia and Janet with three each. I want to say here, Mary is unique among us in being honored by having a daughter who is a minister of God. That ought to make up for many grandchildren. And then of course, last but not least, there is David, beloved grandson of Deborah!

And that's the way it is, this 4th day of September, 1969. Twelve of us still living out of seventeen, nine here, three adrift and over sixty grandchildren! But how many books have we read? We have lost count of them. We elected Winnie permanent reader, but she got tired of it and Peg tried for a while ---- meanwhile the listeners nod over their sewing and come to with a jerk ---- and why not? Thirty-six years is a long time Every Thursday Afternoon.